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THE INDIAN MINTS.

WE British are a peculiar race. At times we excite ourselves over the most trivial and transient events; while at others we calmly retain our seats in our easy-chairs, and without even taking an extra pull at our pipes, read with equanimity of some startling discovery, or some sudden change of international relationships which threatens to revolutionise no inconsiderable portion of the world. When, a little more than twelve months ago, the announcement was made that the Government, acting on the advice of their financial and political advisers in India, had resolved upon closing the Indian Mints to any further public coinage of silver, there was just a little flutter among those immediately interested, or in some way likely to be affected; but as far as the general public was concerned, they took no more, perhaps less, notice than they would have done of the announcement that henceforth no more florins, but only half-crowns, would be issued from the Mint on Tower Hill. And yet that simple act was one likely to have far-reaching effects upon two hundred and fifty millions of people whom we regard as our fellow-subjects, and perhaps indirectly upon the welfare and prosperity of the whole civilised world.

Considering the pride we feel in the possession of India, and the immense benefits we are, in one way or other, supposed to derive from it, it is astonishing how little the average Briton knows about its affairs or cares about how it is governed. It is notorious that the Indian Budget, dealing with the vast revenues of our great Eastern Empire, is always introduced at the fag-end of the Parliamentary Session, propounded to almost empty benches, and rushed through in the course of a few hours. For many reasons, it is perhaps just as well that the British public should be content to leave its interests in the hands of those officials in whom they feel confidence, as it is practically impossible, without long experience,

to understand the prejudices and requirements of native races absolutely foreign to us in blood, habit, and religion, and in extending to them many of the privileges to which we have become attached, we should be conferring a very doubtful boon. But at the same time it is our bounden duty to watch the course of events and of legislation with sufficient closeness to know when any act of injustice is being done which will alienate the loyalty and check the progress which we all desire India to participate in as well as ourselves. It is most likely that such an act has just taken place in the attempt to change the currency of that country; and the very fact that it has been done by men answerable for its welfare, and thoroughly desirous of promoting its interests, rather than any personal ones of their own, naturally tends to induce the belief that what has been done must be for the best. It is therefore all the more necessary that we should attempt to grasp the situation for ourselves, and clearly understand not only the circumstances which have led to such a radical change, but what the outcome of it is likely to be.

Every one knows that the finances of India have of late years been greatly disordered by the heavy fall in the value of silver, and the consequent depreciation of the rupee, which in that country is the monetary standard, just as the sovereign is with us. How this has come about can be very easily explained. A considerable part of the cost of governing India is annually incurred in London. In the first place, a great deal of money has been borrowed in this country for public works there, such as the construction of railways—the dividends of which the Government guarantees—irrigation works, and many others of a nature which are always looked upon as remunerative expenditure. India has therefore to find the money to pay the interest on these loans, very little of which, however, can be regarded as a tax upon the natives. Then, again, an expensive establishment has to be kept up at home to conduct

the affairs of our great Eastern Empire, which has to bear some portion of the cost. And finally, large quantities of stores of all descriptions for the use of our officials there, and the proper conduct of the Government, such as telegraph wire, stationery, and hundreds of other things, which can either only be procured at all or to much greater advantage in this country, have to be paid for. When all these items are added up, the result is a little bill of over fifteen million pounds sterling, which in some way or other India must pay to England.

Formerly, the arrangement of this was a matter of extreme simplicity. The rupee was worth just two shillings, and ten of them, therefore, went to a sovereign. The Indian Finance Minister knew that, if fifteen million pounds had to be remitted, he would require one hundred and fifty million rupees for the purpose; or, as he would call it, fifteen hundred lakhs. But as silver and the rupee became depreciated, the amount of indebtedness did not grow any smaller, and it took a great many more rupees to meet it, so that if the value of the latter was only one shilling instead of two, it followed that he would require three thousand instead of fifteen hundred lakhs, as formerly. On the other hand, the revenues which he had to draw showed no corresponding expansion, because the rupee maintained its value in India itself, and was only depreciated when it came to be exchanged outside; consequently, this additional fifteen hundred lakhs, or whatever the amount might be, became an increase in the annual expenditure. It has been accumulating gradually over a number of years, and has not taken place all at once, and had to be raised either by additional taxation or by fresh borrowing, which in the end only tended to make matters worse.

This, then, was the state of affairs when the United States, by threatening to repeal the Sherman Silver Act, brought about a panic in the silver market, which carried the price down to a figure which made the rupee worth only about tenpence-halfpenny of our English money. The Indian Government officials insisted that it was impossible for them to raise sufficient to go on paying the now enormous amount of rupees necessary to meet the sterling indebtedness of the country, and that some steps must be taken to prevent its depreciation any further. The only way to do this was, as they thought, to stop the public any longer taking silver to the Mints and demanding its coinage into rupees; and this is what was done, after exhaustive investigation and inquiry by a Committee presided over by Lord Herschell.

Now, up to this point there seems no ground whatever on which to raise an objection. The Government of India was clearly in a difficulty, and it was said to be highly dangerous to

attempt to impose any further taxation upon the natives to enable them to get over it. What course could be wiser than, by closing the Mints, to artificially raise the value of all the currency then in circulation? But it was one thing to stop coining, and quite another to raise the value of what was already coined. The Government decided that for the future the rupee should be worth 1s. 4d., and they might just as well have passed an Act of Parliament at the same time to say that a sovereign was worth twenty-five shillings. They further said that any one lodging English sovereigns with the Presidency treasuries should receive in exchange coined rupees at the rate of 15 to 1. It proved, however, no more possible to keep the exchange at 1s. 4d., than to attract to the Mints the hoards of gold which are known to exist in India, and which competent authorities say exceed two hundred and fifty million pounds in value.

The policy, in fact, has proved a failure; and although the India Council in London held out for months, in the hope of starving the community into purchasing its rupees, it had at last to give way, and after vainly offering to take 1s. 3½d., to accept the best offer it could get, which is now round about 1s. 1d.; and the principal result so far has been to increase the sterling debt of India by nearly ten million pounds, on which interest will have to be remitted in the future. It is nevertheless persisted in, on the principle adopted by the late Mr Micawber that *Something will turn up*; and the very lame apology is offered that, after all, it has proved of some partial benefit, inasmuch as the rupee is worth three-halfpence more than the value of the silver in it; but those who offer this excuse apparently overlook the fact that one reason why silver remains so low is, because it can no longer be coined in India. But whatever justification there may be for a continuance of it from a purely English and official point of view, there is absolutely none from that of the natives, whose interests we are bound to protect; and where the two conflict, there should not be a moment's hesitation in the mind of any Englishman as to the course this country ought to pursue. The only pretence upon which the natives could have benefited has been falsified by the result, and the increased taxation which was declared to be impossible has since had to be imposed, so far, at any rate, without any of the uprisings so confidently predicted.

There is another way of partly meeting the difficulty, but one which is always unpopular with officials—a reduction in expenditure; but it is nevertheless one upon which public opinion should insist, because there is little doubt that economies could be introduced in many ways, without in the slightest degree interfering with the efficiency of administration. And although no irreparable mischief has yet been done by the closing of the Mints, the possibilities, nay the probabilities of future trouble are so serious, that the reversal of the policy ought to be insisted upon while it can be done without financial sacrifice or loss of prestige.

Were the English Government to refuse to

coin any more sovereigns, we might not suffer any immediate inconvenience, because there are plenty in circulation to meet present requirements; but we know that any such proposal, which could only be designed to give an artificial value to our currency, would not only be contrary to every sound principle of political economy, but would prove most disastrous to all our commercial relations with foreign countries. What is true of England is true of India also, and we should not permit the light of great principles to be obscured by some passing cloud of expediency.

Quite apart from the intricacies and difficulties of exchange operations which concern the merchants and traders of India, who are well able to take care of their own interests, and into which we need not here enter, a great wrong is being done to the native peasantry of that country. Scarcity of gold, which means money, is believed to be one of the most important of the many causes which have brought about such an immense fall in the value of agricultural produce in the Western hemisphere; and yet, with this fact staring us in the face, an attempt is made to create a similar scarcity of money in India by preventing the coinage of any more silver, which is abundant. If successful, it must have just the same result there as with us; so that while we are contriving and scheming to increase the quantity and active circulation of money in Europe, we are doing our best to stop its issue and prevent its circulation in Asia. But beyond that, it is a well-known fact that the savings-banks in India take the form of private hoards, not in old stockings, because hosiery has not yet become popular there, but in all sorts of silver ornaments, fastened about the persons of their women and children so securely, that they can often only be removed with the aid of the village blacksmith; and when the quantity becomes too large for this, the remainder is buried in some hole in the ground near the hut or habitation of the owner. Sometimes the silver may have passed through the mints and become rupees; often enough it has been used in its simple state of bullion, with the knowledge that when the necessity arose it could be converted without loss into money equivalent to its weight. And although wealth changes hands much less frequently than in Western countries, there are certain periods when families and individuals have to dispose of amounts, small perhaps by themselves, but amounting to a large sum in the aggregate. In a year, for instance, declared by the priests as propitious for marriages, much money is spent not only in festivities, but in providing the brides with dowries, and savings, painfully scraped together over a long period, are quickly disseminated. Or something more serious—a famine—overtakes the land, and the people inhabiting large territories find themselves suddenly deprived of food. The construction of railways and canals has done much to enable the Government to cope in future more successfully than ever with such a calamity; but the people themselves, before taking to the relief works, will in many instances spend everything they have to maintain an independent existence;

just as many of our own poor will exhaust every resource before going to the workhouse. But when they come to part with their treasure, which they have all along regarded as money, they will be told that it has ceased to have any value as such, and that they must first go to the village money-changer or usurer, and take whatever he will give them for it, before they can obtain the rice or other food they so much need.

Let us imagine, if we can, a corresponding state of things at home. Instead of the Post-office Savings-bank, in which the savings of the artisan and small shopkeeper are deposited, they have grown accustomed to secreting in their own dwellings, or about their persons, small pieces of gold, which they know can always be exchanged for their weight in sovereigns, and that for every ounce they possess they can always get exactly £3, 17s. 10d. A great strike breaks out, involving perhaps several hundred thousand hands, and these men with their families, have to fall back largely on their accumulated savings. They take their gold to exchange, but are told that the Government has stopped buying it, and that the most they can sell it for elsewhere is three pounds. Would they stop to consider that the Government had a perfect right to regulate the currency of the country? Or would they not rather imagine that they had been grossly defrauded, and create disturbances leading very likely to riot and bloodshed?

How much more likely, then, are such events to happen among a down-trodden and ignorant people, ruled by an alien race, if it is brought home to their minds by agitators, who are always on the lookout for grievances, that they have been robbed—a charge only too likely to be believed when the price of food, in consequence of scarcity, has risen to a high figure, while that of silver, owing to the great pressure to sell it, has fallen heavily.

Even were this the only ground of objection, it is sufficiently important to make us ask, whether the Government has not made a huge blunder, which may some day land us in the most serious difficulties? This is no party question, and whichever side had been in office last year, the circumstances of the moment would have compelled them to yield to the pressure brought to bear. But the danger is now past, and the worst has happened. America has stopped purchasing silver, and the price has fallen so low, that the chances of a further decline are remote; and if the Indian Mints were once more thrown open, it is more than probable that instead of the rupee falling to the level of silver, silver would rise to the value of the rupee, and cause not the slightest disturbance in the national finances. Intricate and uninteresting as questions of currency are generally considered, we have here one of so much importance to the welfare of our vast Indian Empire, as well as of our own, that it becomes the duty of every citizen to think the matter out as carefully, and decide upon it as conscientiously, as he would upon one on which he has to record his vote at the poll. Without a decided and determined expression of public opinion, no Government will be strong enough

to resist the influence of Indian officials, who, in this instance, at any rate, appear to be acting directly contrary to the interests of the country they govern.

THE LAWYER'S SECRET.*

CHAPTER XII.—MR FREDERICK BOLDON COMES TO ROBY A SECOND TIME.

THE days glided by ; and little by little a sort of tacit engagement sprang up between Lady Boldon and Hugh Thesiger. She could not help herself. She could not deny herself the sweet comfort of those little signs of love that he offered her—a familiar word, a pressure of the hand, a tender glance. He had persuaded himself that his fears were vain, that Adelaide was only shy, fearful, perhaps, of what the world might say of her second marriage ; and he thought that all she needed before she formally promised him her hand was to become accustomed to regard him as her lover. So he went often to the Chase ; and the little world around them began, not unnaturally, to speak of the two as being either actually engaged or on the point of becoming so.

A few days before the end of August, Thesiger received a letter from Lady Boldon. It was an invitation to make one of a party which was to assemble at Roby Chase for the partridge-shooting. The party had been planned and talked of some time before ; and Hugh's coming was taken as a matter of course. This letter was written partly to invite, through Hugh's intervention, Mr Terence O'Neil, whom Lady Boldon had met several times at the Rectory.

'It is good-natured of Adelaide to ask him,' said Hugh to himself, when he read the letter ; 'but it is not wise to throw him and Marjory together, circumstances being what they are.'

However, Hugh could not refuse to forward the invitation to his friend ; and of course it was gladly accepted.

Marjory and her mother, as well as two or three old schoolfellows of Adelaide's, and three or four distant connections of her family, were to be of the party. There was also one relation of her late husband invited, the only one whom Lady Boldon knew, even by name—Mr Frederick Boldon. This invitation was not given wholly from disinterested motives. Adelaide felt that her future was dark and uncertain ; and she thought that it might be a good stroke of policy to make friends, if possible, with the man who might one day reign at the Chase. Yet she shrank from seeing him, and almost hoped that he would not come.

Frederick Boldon, however, was a man who never allowed sentiment to interfere with his interests or his pleasures. He had by this time partly got over his disappointment. His threat about disputing Sir Richard's will had of course resulted in nothing. Frederick Boldon was far too shrewd a man to throw away his

money in fighting a lawsuit without a solid ground-work of evidence. When he received Lady Boldon's invitation, he told himself that though it might be unpleasant to stay as guest in a house of which he ought to be the master, nothing could be gained by refusing Lady Boldon's advances ; while something might be gained by responding to them. Possibly he might be able to make love successfully to the widow, and gain his cousin's estate by that means. If not, there was at least ten days' or a fortnight's shooting to be had, and that was a thing not to be despised.

So Frederick Boldon journeyed down to Woodhurst for the second time. He was accompanied on this occasion by Louis Ducrot, his French valet ; for Mr Boldon was determined to appear in his favourite rôle of a man of fashion.

Lady Boldon's guests amused themselves as people generally do in an English country house in September. The men went shooting in the morning ; and most of them spent the afternoon in the billiard-room. The girls spent the forenoon in gossiping together, and walked or rode out after lunch. But it soon became evident that the party was not going to prove a success. Its members were too miscellaneous in their characters and dispositions : they did not hang well together.

The failure of Lady Boldon's party was due in great measure to the presence of Mr Boldon and his servant. Boldon was selfish and arrogant in his manner—nobody liked him. He soon discovered that he had no chance of becoming Lady Boldon's second husband ; and it was not long before he noticed the preference which she had for Hugh Thesiger. His demeanour to Hugh after this discovery was so wanting in courtesy, that Hugh had the greatest difficulty in avoiding an open quarrel with him. In fact, it was only at Lady Boldon's special entreaty that he consented to stay a few days longer under the same roof with a man who all but openly insulted him.

Ducrot, as well as his master, was a source of trouble to the lady of the house. He carried on a strong flirtation with Mrs Bruce's maid, a country girl whom the Rector's wife had brought with her to wait on herself and Marjory. He then transferred his volatile affections to Lady Boldon's own maid, a foolish, pert, London girl called Julia Stephens. Mrs Bruce, who felt that her maid was under her protection, and that the girl had been badly treated, was of opinion that Ducrot, or Julia, or both of them, ought to be turned out of the house ; and Lady Boldon, who was averse to such extreme measures, had some difficulty in preserving the peace.

At length the time fixed for the breaking up of the party was at hand. It was the morning of the thirteenth ; and most of the guests were to leave that afternoon, only Hugh Thesiger and the members of the Rector's family remaining until the following day.

For several days Lady Boldon had been complaining of neuralgia ; and she had remained a good deal in her own room. On this, the last day of her friends' visit, however, she forced herself to come down to breakfast as usual.

There was no regular breakfast-time at the Chase. Everybody rose early—at least the men did—on account of the partridges; and breakfast was served in the great dining-room between eight and ten.

Letters were delivered during the breakfast hour; and it was an understood thing that every one might open and read his or her letters without apology. On this particular morning, Lady Boldon opened one of her letters without first glancing at the handwriting on the envelope—opened it, read a few lines, and turned as pale as if she were going to faint. Indeed, Frederick Boldon, who sat near her, thought she was going to faint. She looked up, cast a half-timidous glance round the table, and saw him watching her curiously. Immediately, her eyes dropped. She folded up her letter, and put it back in its envelope, though she was forced to keep her hands below the level of the table, to prevent any one seeing how they trembled. The other guests, busy with their own letters or newspapers, did not observe that anything was amiss; but Lady Boldon knew that her husband's cousin was watching her. And, looking at Hugh a moment later, she saw that he, too, had noticed her agitation. She made a great effort, and thrusting the letter into her pocket, went on with her breakfast—or seemed to do so—without saying a word, or casting another look either at Hugh or at Mr Boldon.

As soon as the meal was over, and the guests had dispersed, Mr Frederick Boldon went up to his own room and rang for his servant.

'I am not going to shoot this morning, Ducrot,' he said. 'See that my things are packed in plenty of time for the afternoon train.' He gave a few other directions, and then, as the man was leaving the room, called him back. 'By the way,' he said, 'I think it likely that Lady Boldon may write a letter to-day of—er—of some importance. Do you think you could find out for me who her correspondent is?'

'Very likely, sir,' said the Frenchman, with a grin.

'Do: I'll give you five shillings. Stay—it's possible that Madame may telegraph. Now, if she does, I want to know who the telegram is addressed to. Can you find that out for me?'

'No doubt, sir,' said the valet, with a bow and another grin.

'That will do, then. I leave by the four o'clock train.'

The hours passed, and Mr Boldon hung about the house, waiting to receive Ducrot's report. He was determined to find out the origin of the letter that had affected his cousin's widow so strangely. The Frenchman, however, made no sign; and luncheon time was drawing near.

The luncheon bell had rung, and Boldon was wondering whether it would be possible to invent an excuse for postponing his departure, at least until the evening mail had gone, when Ducrot made his appearance, and with rather a crest-fallen air, said that a telegram had been sent off by Lady Boldon shortly after breakfast.

'You scoundrel! And you only tell me this now!'

'It was of no use,' said the valet, with a sub-flavour of impudence in his tone. 'The telegram was sealed up in an envelope addressed to the postmaster at Woodhurst.'

'Ah! And yet'—

Mr Boldon fell into a brown study, during which his valet slipped out of the room. He was debating with himself whether he could not find out something about that telegram, or whether he were not pursuing a phantom. It certainly looked as if Lady Boldon had a secret, and a very serious one too. It could not be a mere money difficulty—she had three times as much money as she wanted. Suppose she had been married already, when she married Sir Richard, and this was a blackmailing letter from her first husband, her real husband? Mr Boldon had heard of such things. If anything of that kind were the case, of course she would not be Sir Richard's widow, for she could not have been his wife; and as the property was left to her as his wife, the bequest would be void, and the estate would fall to him, Frederick Boldon. If any such secret existed, it would surely be worth while to unearth it!

Such were the thoughts that were passing through Mr Boldon's mind, when the door opened, and Ducrot reappeared.

'Lady Boldon has just gone down-stairs to lunch, sir,' he said; 'and before she went into the dining-room, she dropped some letters into the post-bag hanging in the hall.'

'Can't you bring the addresses of them?' said Mr Boldon angrily.—'Stop; no. You needn't mind.'

He waited five minutes longer, and then, feeling confident that everybody would be at lunch, he went down-stairs, walked boldly up to the letter-bag, and taking out the letters, glanced hurriedly at their addresses. The only name he recognised was that of Mr Felix; but Mr Boldon could not feel by any means certain that this was the correspondent whose letter had terrified Lady Boldon. It seemed unlikely that a respectable family solicitor like Mr Felix, his uncle's solicitor, should be the depositary of a guilty secret of Lady Boldon's. Yet it was possible.

Mr Boldon went in to lunch; and after a time he bade his hostess farewell, declaring his intention of walking to the station, while Ducrot followed him with the luggage.

Having arrived at the village, Mr Boldon did not at once turn up the road which led to the station, but made his way to the post-office. The postmaster's son, a smart lad of nineteen or twenty years of age, was behind the counter.

'You attend to the telegraphs, I think? Ah—I thought so. I called to ask whether a telegram Lady Boldon sent in this morning was properly addressed.'

'We're not allowed to say anything about the telegrams, sir,' began the youth nervously.

'I'm not asking you anything about it,' said Mr Boldon with mild surprise. 'I only want to know whether it was properly addressed.'

'Oh!'

The young man turned to a file. 'What was the name, sir?'

'Felix—Mr Felix—from Lady Boldon.'

'Here it is. Felix, 9 Norfolk Street, Chancery Lane, W.C.'

'That's quite right. Thank you,' said Mr Boldon, quitting the office.

'So the letter was from that old rascal of a lawyer, after all?' he thought to himself, as he walked slowly on to the station. 'I half wish I had made some excuse for leaving Ducrot behind—or staying behind myself. I might have tried to get a peep inside my lady's letter to the lawyer. But that might have been a dangerous trick to play; and very likely the real answer was in the telegram, not in the letter.—Well; there's a secret between these two—no doubt of that. If ever I read terror in a human face, I read it in Lady Boldon's face this morning.'

The majority of Lady Boldon's guests drove off to the station at the appointed hour. The lady of the house bade them a smiling adieu, and then turned to Hugh, who was standing near, with a weary sigh of relief.

'Thank Heaven they're gone,' she said, under her breath.

'Will you say the same when I say good-bye to-morrow, Adelaide?' he asked with a half-smile.

'No; how can you ask such a question, Hugh? But these people have bored me so, especially that man Boldon! He shall never come here again. He is odious.'

'I confess I think so too,' said Hugh quietly.

'It made my neuralgia worse even to look at him. The tones of his horrid, rasping voice made my nerves tingle.—I think I will go and lie down for a little,' she said, moving slowly towards the staircase.

Hugh made her take his arm and lean upon it, and went with her to the door of her room. He was sorry that she was suffering, and disappointed too, for he had hoped that, now that the house was restored to its usual state, he would be able to have a little quiet chat with her, and perhaps get her to tell him the cause of the grave trouble he had seen in her face that morning.

As it happened, Hugh held a brief in an arbitration which had been fixed for the 17th of September; and he felt that it was time for him to get back to the Temple, and set to work on his papers. So he arranged to go straight to London on the 14th, the following day, without returning to Chalfont.

Lady Boldon did not appear again that evening; but next morning she came down to breakfast, and declared that she felt better.

'You go by the eleven-forty, don't you?' she said to Hugh.

'Yes.'

'Oh, then you may be my escort, if you like. I want to take a run up to town; and that is the train that will suit me best.'

'Do you think, Adelaide, you ought to travel when your nerves are in such a tender state? put in Mrs Bruce.

'It's precisely for that reason that I am going, mamma. I want to consult a doctor about my neuralgia.'

Mrs Bruce was a little startled at her daughter

proposing to travel to London alone, except for the companionship of a young man who was regarded as her lover. However, Adelaide was her own mistress, and very well able to take care of herself, so she said nothing.

She was going to see Mr Felix. The letter she had received from him had been filled with bitter, passionate reproaches. It began with a threat to send Sir Richard's later will to Mr Frederick Boldon, confessing the whole plot. He would rather run the risk of punishment, he declared, than live to be defrauded of her hand. He could not believe, he said, that she really meant to marry him in a few months' time. It did not look like it. He was not well: anxiety about her real intentions had made him ill. But he was able to be up, and he insisted on seeing her. He must see her, and learn from her own lips what she meant to do.

Lady Boldon had found herself compelled to obey this summons. As she sat in the railway carriage, glancing now and then at her lover as he sat opposite, she felt that she was in reality a slave, bound hand and foot. The lawyer held her as by a chain of iron. She could not escape him, and she did not dare to defy him. She felt that he was capable of disclosing the part she had played, for the mere pleasure of revenge; and exposure would mean the loss of Hugh's love, shame, ruin. She forgot, for the time, that she had herself to blame for yielding to the lawyer's suggestion. Her uppermost feeling was that she hated James Felix with all her heart.

Hugh saw reflected in her face something of the sorrow and despair which tortured her.

'Adelaide,' he said gently, 'I wish you would tell me what it is that is troubling you so much. Have you had bad news of any kind?'

Lady Boldon started, and answered quickly: 'I have had no bad news. How should you think so?'

'Yesterday morning, at breakfast, when you opened one of your letters, you turned so pale that I feared you were going to faint.'

'Oh, I remember. I had a dreadful attack of neuralgia just then. It comes and goes so suddenly. I fear there is an attack coming on now.—And that reminds me: I have heard of a specific for tic which they say is marvellously rapid in its action—works like a charm. I have the prescription for it here; and I meant to buy some in London. Perhaps you wouldn't mind getting some for me when we reach town?'

Hugh took the piece of paper which Lady Boldon put into his hand, and glanced at it with a doubtful air.

'What is this stuff?' he asked.

'Oh, it is a new drug, I believe—quite a specific for neuralgia.'

'As you are going to consult a doctor, wouldn't it be better to wait and ask him whether it would be a good thing to take?'

'How tiresome you are, Hugh! All men are, sometimes, I believe! I want the medicine to take home with me, so that I may have something to fall back upon, if the physician's remedies fail. But don't let me trouble you; I can easily—'

'Oh, I'll get the stuff for you if you really wish to have it,' said Hugh; 'but take care how you use it. Those new drugs are not very well understood; and I fancy this one is dangerous.'

'Have you anywhere else to go in London?' asked Hugh, half absently, after a pause.

'Yes; I wish to go as far as the Temple. I have to make a call in Chancery Lane.'

The next instant Lady Boldon regretted her frankness, for Thesiger not unnaturally rejoined—'Chancery Lane! Are you going to see Mr Felix again?'

There was a troubled look in Lady Boldon's eyes. She did not speak, but merely nodded.

'I know Mr Felix by sight,' said Hugh. 'He met you in Fleet Street, I remember, when you and I were in London together two years ago.'

'Yes,' answered Lady Boldon; and then, feeling that it was better in every way not to make a mystery of the matter, she went on to say—'Yesterday he wrote to me saying it was necessary that he should see me, and that he could not come to Roby, as he is not strong enough to leave the house. He lives in chambers beside his office, he tells me.'

'Don't let me pry into your secrets, Adelaide,' said Hugh gently, after a little while; 'but I can't help thinking that you are in trouble about something. You can't hide that from me; I see it in your face.'

Lady Boldon said nothing; for she felt that if she tried to speak she should burst into tears.

'Adelaide, my darling,' said her lover yet more gently, taking her hand in his, 'can you not tell me what is making you so sad?'

She shook her head.

'Has this visit to Mr Felix something to do with it? If so, I beg you to let me see him for you. Let me go to him and tell that you are my promised wife, and—'

'No—oh, no! You forget, Hugh; I am not that—yet.'

'I can't understand you, Adelaide. We are not formally betrothed, it is true; but—Never mind that now,' he said, breaking off suddenly. 'Let me go with you as a friend. You ought to have a male friend with you, to advise you in business matters. I may go then?—What do you say? You dare not take me!—Adelaide! Can it be that you are afraid of this man? It almost looks like it! Has he dared to terrorise you—to make you imagine that somehow you are dependent on his goodwill?'

Lady Boldon would have replied if she had been able to speak; but she was unable to breathe a syllable. Her nerves, weakened already by neuralgia, were completely unstrung by her mental trouble and anxiety. She trembled from head to foot, and suddenly burst into tears. The sobs came thick and fast; she hid her face, but clung to Hugh with one hand, as if he had power to save her from some impending calamity.

'Adelaide,' he said, when she had become a little calmer, 'you really must let me see this Mr Felix in your place.'

'Oh, no—no. You cannot do that.'

'Then let me accompany you.'

'No; that would not do either. You are very kind, Hugh—far too kind to me. And I am very foolish. I have been troubled about something. Don't ask me what it is, for the secret is not altogether my own. But perhaps I am making more of it than there is any need for. I am ashamed of myself—crying and sobbing like a child who has broken a toy. I will—control myself—better. I am not usually a cry-baby; so you must set this exhibition down to the credit of that horrid neuralgia.—See! I am better already,' and the poor thing tried hard to smile.

Once again, before they reached Waterloo, Hugh begged to be allowed to go with the woman he loved to the lawyer's office, even if he waited in the clerks' room while she was closeted with Mr Felix; and again his offer was gently but firmly refused.

A crowd of doubts, surmises, and fears oppressed the young barrister's mind. What could this secret be that lay between Lady Boldon and the solicitor? What was the cause of her tears, her anxiety? And, above all, why should she not confide in him?

SOME REMARKABLE ARTESIAN WELLS.

SCHNEIDEMÜHL is far from being an important place. The ubiquitous English tourist knows it as a sort of half-way house on the railway route from Berlin to Danzig. It is to him a convenient centre from which to explore the kaleidoscopic civilisation of Prussian Poland. From many points of view there is, however, but little to repay the traveller for any efforts he may make in this direction. The country around is flat and uninteresting, tracts of level arable land alternating with dreary marshes or stretches of uninviting woodland. The human components of the picture are for the most part in perfect harmony with the landscape. The stolid agriculturists and spiritless peasants who possess this region pursue the even tenor of their way, in utter ignorance of the great world beyond them. In the dull monotony of their existence, an occasional trip to the neighbouring market town stands out in the boldest of reliefs. Typical of these provincial centres is Schneidemühl. Quite recently, however, this semi-German town has established a claim to public attention other than that which might belong to it as a small town in an agricultural district of Prussian Poland.

It happened in this wise. The twelve thousand inhabitants of Schneidemühl ran short of water. In the autumn and spring months they frequently suffer from an over-abundance of that liquid necessity. Then the neighbouring Kuddow—one of the lesser tributary feeders of the Oder—is apt to inundate the low-lying lands through which it flows. What was wanted, however, was a thoroughly reliable supply of pure drinking-water, which would not fail during the most scorching of droughts. To secure this, the assistance of scientific experts was requisitioned. A little study of the geology of the district showed that the rocks underlying Schneidemühl contained a

vast storehouse of water, which only needed tapping to yield its liquid treasures to the thirsty townsfolk. The water, however, was far removed from the surface, stored in a pervious rock walled in by impervious strata. To allow of the water reaching the surface, a means of communication had to be made through the superincumbent rocks. In short, an artesian well had to be sunk. The necessary plant was obtained; the most likely spot for operations was selected, and workmen skilled in well-sinking were engaged, and for a time splendid progress was made. The fate which has overtaken many artesian borings was not to be experienced in this case. Water there was in abundance. When the boring reached it, a rapid rise was observable up the duct, followed by a large overflow.

So far so good. Water had been struck, and in enormous quantities. How to control it was, however, quite another matter. The good people of Schneidemühl did not require, comparatively speaking, a vast amount of water; yet here was a supply forced upon them which accumulated at an alarming rate, and quite defied their efforts to cope with it. The pent-up stores that had so long lain dormant in their underground cisterns could no longer be kept in check, now that communication was effected with the outer air. The peaceful inhabitants were appalled with the magnitude of the force which they had summoned from the depths of the earth. The horrors of flood began to stare them in the face. Nor were there wanting the presence of other and perhaps more disquieting phenomena. Earth-tremors were frequent. Confused and mysterious subterranean rumblings were heard, clearly indicative of subsidences in that section of the earth's crust underlying the houses of the good folk of Schneidemühl. The ever-increasing flood of water created a new vent for itself, and vast quantities of mud and sand were ejected along with the water. Expert opinion said that the town need fear no danger; the waters would soon go down, and the risk of flood would be over. This supposition was mainly based upon the fact that between the storehouse of waters and the surface there was a solid bed of clay, some forty yards in thickness. This, it was thought, would prevent anything like a continuance of so alarming an outflow. The hope, however, was doomed to disappointment. Earth-shakes became more frequent. Some of the inhabitants experienced many of the phenomena usually associated with a seismic disturbance. The foundations of their houses sank; great cracks formed in the walls, and many a dwelling-house was hastily abandoned on such a peremptory notice to quit. About a week later, the final catastrophe came. After many alarming shocks and subsidences of the ground about the mouth of the well, a violent movement of what might be called the crater of the boring took place. Amidst the rush of the escaping water and the thunderous roar of the subsiding land, the whole boring and pumping plant disappeared from sight. Fortunately, no loss of life took place. The final collapse was heralded by rumblings and tremors which placed the engineers upon their

guard, and they very wisely removed the workmen from proximity to the shaft.

It seemed at first as if this refractory well was now contented with the mischief it had wrought, for the waters began to subside. The respite, however, was but short-lived. Soon the underground torrent once more made a way for itself, and the scene of the subsidence was speedily buried beneath a pond of water, in the centre of which the monster artesian foamed and bubbled. The pond soon attained the dimensions of a small lake, and that part of the town which had hitherto escaped damage was threatened with inundation. In time, however, this danger was averted, for a trench or cutting was made to carry the overflowing waters into the adjacent Kuddow.

After these unpleasant experiences, it is no wonder to learn that the burghers of Schneidemühl are resolved in future to be content with an inadequate water-supply, rather than again risk an appeal to the vast but masterless reservoirs which lie pent up beneath them.

While these events were transpiring in this out-of-the-way corner of Posen, an artesian boring was being made nearer home, which has given marvellous but satisfactory results. At Bourn, in Lincolnshire, an artesian well was sunk to supply the town of Spalding, some ten miles away, with water. Such wells have been sunk in this district from time immemorial, and rejoice in the vernacular denomination of 'blow-holes.' Scientific engineering has now made even the sinking of a deep well a matter of comparative ease. In the present case no difficulty was encountered, and a boring thirteen inches in diameter was satisfactorily sunk. As the well was made, it was lined with ten-inch tubes; and to guard against unwanted water finding its way downwards between the pipe and the sides of the bore-hole, the tube was tightly encased in cement, packed between it and the sides of the well.

At a depth of sixty-six feet, water impregnated with iron was encountered, but this chalybeate liquid was excluded as the tubes were carried deeper. Some twelve feet lower, the main spring was tapped, and the water rose very slowly up the tube; and it was twenty-four hours before the water overflowed. As the depth increased, so did the volume of the ascending current; and by the time the well had reached the depth of one hundred feet, the outflow was thirteen hundred gallons per minute, or 1,872,000 gallons per day. Although this was an enormous flow, yet the engineers thought, by going a little deeper, a still larger supply would be available. Numerous cases are on record where, under similar circumstances, the deepening of the well has resulted in complete failure. It will be readily understood that in such instances increased boring has carried the well through the non-porous rock upon which the water-bearing layer rested, thus allowing the water to escape. With the Bourn well, however, the deepening of the bore-hole had the desired effect, for, at a depth of one hundred and twenty feet, the outflow increased to eighteen hundred gallons per minute, or no less than 2,592,000 gallons per day.

While we may be disposed to regard so

splendid a piece of engineering skill as the Bourn well as a mere matter of course, it must be remembered that well-sinking in the past was a work of the utmost difficulty. Without discussing the vexed question of the means employed in sinking the wells of ancient Egypt, or the artesian bores whose overflowing waters nourish the oases of the Sahara, we will just allude to two other monster artesians whose story has become historic.

The first of these is that at Grenelle, near Paris. This well was commenced in 1834, to supply the French capital with water. When a depth of 1254 feet had been reached, a length of 270 feet of the boring-rods broke off, and fell to the bottom of the hole. Nowadays, the laborious rod-process is quite obsolete. Fifteen months were taken up in fishing up the broken rods, and then work was resumed. When the boring was carried down to fifteen hundred feet, the French Government wished to stop the work, on the ground that further expense was simply throwing good money after bad. The savant Arago, however, urged them to exercise a little more faith and patience. His advice was followed, with the result that, at a further depth of three hundred feet, water was encountered; and those who had laboured at the enterprise from 1834 to 1841 were rewarded by seeing a stream of six hundred gallons per minute escape from the orifice of the well.

In 1855 another well was commenced in the Paris basin. Water was tapped at a depth of 1920 feet, and this enormous boring, which is two feet four inches in diameter at the bottom, ejected a stream of water to a height of fifty feet, and at the enormous rate of five and a half million gallons per day.

These are among the more remarkable specimens of artesian wells. But well-sinking has now attained the dignity of a science, and the increase of our population and the development of our manufacturing industries has resulted in these underground water-supplies being tapped to such an extent that in many parts of England the rocks are literally riddled with these ingenious borings.

A TALE OF OLD EDINBURGH.

CHAPTER II.—THE BARBARY CORSAIRS.

'WEEL, aweel!' muttered Wattie, 'if we're to stick here like pease-bogles, we maun e'en brazen it out!' So he ranged himself by the side of the Lord Provost, and awaited the coming of the strange troops. 'May be,' he murmured, 'when they see us like this, they'll be scared awa', and rin back to their ships, and so the town'll be saved after a'.'

When the approaching company saw them thus stand, the leader put his horse to the gallop, and the dozen horsemen behind him put their horses to the trot, to keep up with him. Then the spell upon the Provost was broken, and he turned as if he would escape.

'Stay!' cried the leader, in quite intelligible human speech. 'On your life, stir not!'

'Rin, Wattie!' then whispered the Provost

to his companion. 'Slip awa', man! Ye're light on your feet! And tell the Waiters to keep the Nether Bow Port closed—letting you in first! And gang to Jock the Drummer, and turn him out to beat his drum, to rouse up the Council and the town! Awa' wi' ye!

'Deil a bit o' me will stir without your honour's sel'!' said Wattie.

'I canna rin!' said the Provost; 'I'm ower auld and heavy!—Awa' wi' ye, or ye'll be ta'en!'

So Wattie slipped from his side and fled; and though one or two of the advancing vanguard fired after him, his wild leaps and gambols as he ran kept him free of their shots. No pursuit was made—probably because he appeared a creature of no consequence—and he got clear away on his errand. Meanwhile, the Provost was surrounded by the vanguard of horsemen, and confronted by the leader. Two or three dismounted, and were for searching the Provost for pistols, but their leader bade them let be, in a foreign tongue.

'I am weaponless, sirs, ye see,' said the Provost, raising his arms and his cloak and showing his belt.—'And now,' continued he, addressing the leader, 'I'm fain to hear who ye are and what business ye come upon this gate!'

'Auld Reekie all over!' exclaimed the leader. 'He's more curious about our persons and business than he is anxious about his own life and property!'

The Provost stared hard to hear such familiar speech come from one arrayed in an outlandish white mantle and a turban.

'Your bonnet and your cloak, sir,' said the Provost sharply, 'should speak you an outlandish heathen or a Turk; but your speech, sir, bewrayeth you: you're a Scottish man, or, at the least, a Borderer!'

'Scottish man,' quoth he! said the stranger. 'And must every one who knows a tag of your uncouth speech be a native of your barbarous, bigoted country?'

'You will not deceive me, sir,' maintained the Provost confidently. 'I ken ower weel the accent of the Luckenbooths and the West Port. This maun be but a ploy, or a heathenish masque, sir. Come ye for Argyll and the Convention, or for that deil Montrose and the king? Are ye for the Covenant, or for the malignants and prelatists?'

'What the pest names are they?' said he in the turban. 'A plague on both your parties, say I. If I were king, I would forbid all separating names. As for me, I am neither for Argyll nor for Montrose—no, nor for the king—but just like Harry Wynd, for my own hand.'

'And who are you, then, sir,' stoutly demanded the Provost, 'that speak of Harry Wynd and your own hand?'

'I am one,' said the other, 'that you will know more of before you have done with him. I serve under my own banner, and I call no man master save and except His Shereefian Majesty, the Soldan of Barbary, the renowned, warlike, and kindly Muley El-Valid.'

'Guidsakes!' exclaimed the Provost. 'Whatna mulish, heathenish name is that?'

'I am here on a special mission, worthy sir,'

he added abruptly; 'but before I say more, inform me of the quality of the person whom I address.'

'I am Lord Provost,' said the other with simple dignity, 'of this ancient city of Edinburgh.'

The face of the stranger very evidently flushed—though he was a dark man with a tanned skin—and his eye flashed, but whether with pleasure or anger was not plain. 'Now the Lord be praised!' he exclaimed. 'You are the very man whilk of all others I welcome the sight of! My business this day is with the Lord Provost and the Town-council of Edinburgh!—I opine you apprehend my meaning, Provost?'

The two men looked each other straight in the eyes. 'You tell me you are for your own hand,' said the Provost; 'and so I opine you come with intent to plunder and spoil.'

'It is well, Provost, to speak out soon as syne; and you set the example. I must e'en levy a contribution on Auld Reekie for auld sake's sake; but failing that, I must visit in person the dwellings of my Lord Provost, and the Town-council, and other citizens of substance.'

'You'd find us something ill redd up, worthy sir,' said the Provost grimly; 'but we might make shift to give ye kitchin, for the auld town has aye had a welcome for a returned prodigal.'

'Returned prodigal, sirrah?' cried the stranger, frowning, but seeming somewhat put out. 'A truce to compliments. The day wears, and my business will not brook delay; nor am I a man to be trifled with.—So lead on, Provost, and bring me to speech with the Town-council, that I may lay my requisition before them.'

'What needs ye have speech with the haill Council?' said the Provost, gaining time by all means. 'I'm the head of the Council and the town, and I'm here. Can ye not lay your requisition before me?'

'My requisition is twenty thousand pieces of gold, and a modicum of victualling for my ships,' answered the stranger without hesitation.

'Twenty thousand gold-pieces and victuals!' exclaimed the Provost. 'But ye're a bold cock to craw se ercuse! Whaur do ye think so many gold-pieces are to be come by?'

'That's your affair, Provost,' said the other.

'Well, my birkie,' said the Provost, putting a bold face on it, 'ye've come to the wrang shop: it cannot be done.'

'You had better perpend, Provost,' said the stranger. 'I bring you that peaceful offer of a ransom in the one hand; but in the other I bring war and spuilzie.—Interrupt me not, sir. Your hard, bargaining Scots eye asks me, How can I make that threat good? With a twist of his hand and a touch of his heel, which showed he was familiar with the art of the manège, he made his horse plunge and turn. Then he uttered an order in a foreign tongue to his following, and the soldiers opened out and disclosed two cannon. 'There, sir,' said he with a proud fling of his hand, 'is' part of my answer to your question. There you see over two hundred as brave and desperate carles as

ever flashed scimitar or burned powder. They are ready to burst your gates open. They are trained and indured by incessant practice to all the points of war both by sea and by land, and when they are let loose, they are the very hounds of the Nether Pit of Gehenna for blood and rapine and ravishment; for, sir, they bear a name that would blench the cheek of the bravest merchantman that ever put to sea with a fair wind: they are Rovers of Sallee!'

And the name did indeed make even the cheek of the stout Provost turn pale; for all men—and especially those who did any business with foreign countries—had heard of the piracies of the famous Sea-rovers, who, nominally Moorish, were recruited from among the ruffianly, the desperate, and the outlawed of every nation. And it is chronicled concerning them that so early as the closing years of James I., they were the terror of 'all the Straights,' of the European side of the Atlantic, and of 'the narrow seas of England'; and it is certain that oftener than once they even descended on the west of Ireland and raided the country. The title, therefore, of a Rover of Sallee smote on the Provost's ear even more fearfully than would have sounded to his like a century and a half later the name of Paul Jones.

'I am their chief *reis*, or admiral, on this cruise,' continued the stranger. 'I have four well-found ships riding at anchor at this precise moment off the end of the pier of Leith; and they have on board as many men again as ye see behind me, all armed to the teeth, and broadsides of cannon loaded to the throat—waiting my word to ding the township of Leith about the sharp ears of its rascally traders; and then to come on, and do the like, if need be, for Auld Reekie. It rests with you, Provost, and your Council to settle if that shall be done or no.'

'My certie, sir,' said the Provost, putting a good face on it, 'ye're gleg. While you were dingat at our ports and shaking our dames' crockery, where would our burgesses be, trow ye, sir, and where would the castle be—that has been where it is for hundreds of years?'

'You think to come on my blind side, Provost,' said the stranger. 'But—without undervaluing the valour of the citizens and of the garrison of the castle, whilk is doubtless as ancient as you maintain—I opine that neither town nor castle has any resistance to fling away. I know that you have not at this precise moment in the town fifty men fit to bear arms, and not one that has any skill even in a street-tuulzie, and that if the garrison of the castle is able to fire a cannon-shot over our heads, that's all that they can do.'

'Ay, man, is that so?' was all the poor Provost could find to say; but he said it with as full a touch of irony as he could command. 'But ye're a wise chield to ken a' about a town ye make out ye hae never seen before.'

'I have my information, Provost,' said the stranger composedly, 'from the Baileys of Leith, who are fain to beseech you to yield even as they have done, and save their town from sack and ruin. Like wise men, they think it better to lose their coat than their skin.'

He turned again and uttered an order in the

foreign tongue, and there were led forward two men, with their hands tied behind them. They were dressed much like the Provost, and he readily recognised them as they were led near to be Bailies of the port of Leith, whom he knew by name.

'These honest Bailies are here with me, Provost,' said the leader, 'to tell you that their eldest sons are on board my ships as pledges for the payment of the small ransom which I have demanded of their township, and to plead with you to help them to fulfil their contract and to redeem their pledges, who else will be carried away into Moorish slavery.—Tell the Provost,' said he, addressing the unfortunate citizens, 'whether that be true or not?'

'It's ower true, Provost,' said they sadly. 'There was naething to be done but tak' what terms were offered. Beggars canna be choosers.'

'So, Provost,' broke in the leader, 'let us waste no more time, but lead on to the town, and consult with your fellows whether you will pay me my contribution or have your old town sacked.'

'I must e'en bow to necessity,' said the Provost.—'But, saul o' me, man, I had rather fight ye with my bare nieves!'

So he led on back to the town, surrounded by the vanguard of horsemen. As they entered the Canongate, the rapid, alarm roll of a drum was heard from the town; and as they advanced between the high houses, windows were flung open and heads were protruded to survey in silent amazement the strange troop of armed men, like people from another world, who were marching up to the Nether Bow. The afflicted Provost cast up his eyes to the windows of his own house as he passed, but they showed no sign of life; and still the drum rolled, and the hum of excitement grew within the city, and the strange, turbaned men marched steadily forward to the gate, while the sun, which now shone almost directly up the Canongate, flashed on the bright weapons of the strangers—their lances, swords, and musquetoons.

When the Nether Bow was reached at the bottom of the High Street, the Provost knocked at the postern for admittance. The Waiters, or porters, demurred to opening the gate for anybody: their orders were, they said, to keep it closed.

'If the gate is not opened before I count a score, I'll blow it in with my cannon!' roared the turbaned leader, and gave orders that the two pieces of artillery which his men dragged with them should be brought to bear on the gate.

After a word or two from the Provost, the gate was opened wide, and revealed a sulky, angry, amazed, but wholly obstinate crowd, chiefly of women, stretching away up the High Street. They stared at the regular armed ranks of the turbaned strangers, and scowled sulkily at the threatening cannon; but they kept their ground in silence. With orderly promptitude, the leader of the strangers posted some of his men at the gate, chose the twelve horsemen to be with himself, and drew up the remainder square-wise, with the cannon looking up the High Street. The twelve horsemen, on the requisitioned horses, gathered within the gate

about their leader, who with the Provost awaited the hurried approach of the Town-councillors. The Bailies and Councillors came fluttered more with astonishment than with fear. They made for the Provost with unrestrained demonstrations of their feeling. 'Eh, but this is a fair trial of faith, Provost!' said one. 'But whaur do they outlandish carles come frae?' demanded another.

'It would be mair seemly and conformable, friends,' said the Provost, who regretted the want of dignity shown by his colleagues of the Council, 'if we postpone the discussion of these matters till we were in the Council Chamber.'

'If you are for the Town-house, Provost,' said the leader of the strangers, 'I must e'en go with you.'

To that the poor Provost could not choose but assent; and the Council therefore led the way to the Town-house, followed by the Provost and his guardians. The crowd hustled and jostled in the narrow street; but the dark turbaned strangers looked so fierce, so warlike, and so well armed, that the boldest men and women of the crowd held their hand. Had Auld Reekie, however, had its proper complement then of fathers and sons, the strangers might have had a very bad quarter of an hour in the High Street; for the Edinburgh mob had had much experience of street-fighting, and was known to be the fiercest and most formidable of any town in Christendom. The leader of the turbaned cavaliers was probably aware of that; for he kept a shrewd, sharp eye roving restlessly round. Though there were few proper men to be seen in the crowd, he yet had the caution, when the Town-house was reached, to order two-thirds of his small troop to wheel outward and form a semicircle about the door with their lances threateningly advanced against the crowd, so that none should enter save the Council, the two Bailies from Leith, and himself and his bodyguard of four. The minister, Mr Galbraith, who had heard what was forward, hurried up to pass in, but the leader refused to admit him.

'There is no need for a clergyman, or divine, here,' said he.—'A friend of the Lord Provost? That may be; but I trow the Provost will do better in this kittle business without the Geneva bands wagging at his jowl.'

Both the minister and the crowd marvelled to hear the turbaned stranger utter such familiar speech, and they set themselves to discuss the matter. Meanwhile, the strange leader had given the Provost and Council half an hour to find him an answer, and they had retired into the Council Chamber, while he remained in an outer room in the company of his bodyguards.

'Achy!' murmured a voice at the leader's elbow, as he stood waiting and looking out of window. 'Woo'; fine woo—finer than Cheviot; and weel wove; worth a merk the ell, belike. The leader felt a slight tugging, and turned—to see a quaint, dwarfish, barefoot creature, in a broad bonnet, fingering the material of his mantle with great interest.

'Hallo, Jockey!' exclaimed the leader, 'where have you come from?'

'Nae mair Jockey than ye're John, for a' ye may think o' yourself!' said Wattie; for it was he. 'An' ye're a gran' chield enough, I'll

allow, and weel put on.—“Jockey,” quo’ he, ‘ruiniated the creature. ‘I should ken the ring o’ the voice: an’ Embro’ voice, I’ll be sworn. Whaur the deil?’— And the leader caught him trying to get a good view of his face. He turned again and gazed full in Wattie’s eyes; but Wattie was the natural, wild kind of creature that cannot endure a direct and sustained gaze, and he turned his head sharply away with pucker’d brows, and seemed to look busily from the window. ‘Here’s a bonny dirdum ye’ve brought on the auld town, Captain,’ he continued. ‘But the splore would hae had another guess-look if our gutter-bloods hadna been a’ killed aff wi’ the plague.’

‘The plague, say you?’ demanded the leader. ‘Is the plague in the town?’

‘Did ye no ken?—Hoch, ay! The plague’s been haicing a gran’ time o’t in Auld Reekie: ten o’ them buried last night on the chap o’ twal: I saw to them mysel’. Your carles in the big white bonnets down at the Nether Bow, Captain, may be getting smitten at this verra minute!’ The leader again glanced at him, and again found him earnestly perusing his features. ‘Guidsakes!’ exclaimed Wattie, as he again quickly turned his head away. ‘A hereawa’ chield, I’ll be sworn! But whaur the deil?’— And his fingers burrowed in his thick mat of hair to aid recollection. ‘There’s been a rowth o’ roaring loons and scattergoonds that hae loupit the law in the auld town sin’ I can mind,’ he murmured, and again he brought his earnest scrutiny to bear on the leader’s face—who was again anxiously looking through the window—and considered it this way and that. ‘Mony and mony a loon I mind. There was Wattie Wabster had to rin for dirking a chield in the Lawnmarket; but na: he was red-headed. There was Franky Balfour, a lad frae East Lothian, had to rin for a saucy quean; but a’body kens he gaed to France in a collier, and he had tint twa front teeth in a college ploy.—Na, na. It’s no there: it’s langer syne than that.’ And again his fingers burrowed in his mat of hair, while he pondered and viewed this way and that the appearance and bearing of his tall neighbour. ‘I daursay it’s as lang syne as ten or twal’ year come Martinmas. Hech! but that was a bonny splore! Ay, and *he* was a black-avised loon, o’ gentle birth, if I’m no mista’en, and his name was—odsakes! what was his name? His name—ay, his name was Andrew Gray!'

At that the leader started from his anxious reverie, and demanded: ‘Andrew Gray? What’s that about Andrew Gray? Oh, ay, Jockey, I’ve heard something of an Andrew Gray. What’s the tale you have about him in the town? Out with it now, before the Council comes, and—hark ye, Jockey!—neither add to nor abate from the truth as you remember it.’

‘I see nae good it would do me to tell ye aught but the truth, John,’ answered Wattie.

‘John?’ queried the other.

‘If I’m Jockey, ye’re John,’ answered Wattie in grim offence.

‘So like the obstinate old town!’ murmured the other. ‘But go on: to your tale.’

‘Weel, ten or twal’ year syne come Martinmas—ay, it’ll be twal’ year—there was a grand

splore about the Kirk and the Bishops, and the King and the Titulars—I canna mind what it was a’ about, for there’s been sae mony splores and tuilzies about a’ that kind o’ business—but it was a grand splore—ay, man, a mighty splore and a mickle breeze; for what did the loons and the clamjamfrie led on by Andrew Gray do but mak’ a raid on the Lord Provost’s house? Ay, guid sakes! they attackit, and sackit, and brunt the Provost’s house!’

‘Well? well?’ said the other impatiently. ‘Andrew Gray, you tell me, did that?’

‘I’ll no say that Andrew Gray did that wi’ his ain hand—for it would do me nae good to tell ye aught but the truth—but Andrew Gray was the head and leader o’ the rabblement and the wild loons that did it. And he was ta’en and judged in the Court o’ Justiciar, and he was sentenced to be hangit. But he got awa’, man—he got awa’! It was a sair mishanter; for he’d ha’ made a bonny corp!’

‘But how did he get away?’ demanded the other.

‘Ow,’ answered Wattie, ‘he just disappeared frae the Tolbooth—wowf! flisk! and awa’!—and there was the wuddie (gallows) without him! And there’s been neither word, smell, nor snift o’ him since!’ And Wattie gave his listener a very sharp, sidelong look.

‘And that’s all—is it? Was it never kenned wha—was nobody ever suspected of helping him to escape?’

‘Deil a body! A lot o’ gentle and half-gentle folk banged their loudest at the doors o’ the judges to get him aff; but, na?’

‘I’ve heard,’ said the other, ‘that—that Andrew Gray was just a wild, hot-headed loon that meant no harin, and that there was one or two even in the Town-council who thought he should not have been so severely sentenced.’

‘Ay, troth, ane there was, I mind! Nae mair than ane, as I’m a sinner! And that was Bailie Wishart: him that’s now the Lord Provost. What the deil’s come to me that I should hae forgotten that?’

‘Now Lord Provost, is he?’ exclaimed the other.

He had but uttered the words, when the door of the Council Chamber opened, and the Lord Provost came forth, followed sadly by the Council.

A FISH WITH A HISTORY.

THE Reptile House at the Zoological Gardens in London contains many creatures which have no claims or even pretensions to be considered reptiles. Among these is the African ‘*Protopterus*,’ which, even on the most liberal interpretation of the term, cannot be called a reptile. It is, however, undoubtedly one of the most interesting of the varied inhabitants of that institution. Though not a reptile, it is hard to say exactly what it is. It looks like a cross between a fish and an amphibian, with a strong flavouring of something altogether nondescript. That is perhaps the fairest definition that can be given. Its exterior is on the whole fish-

like; but its interior is as decidedly built on the plan of that of a newt; while its weak and thread-like fins are like nothing at all in particular. The *Protopterus* has a more interesting cousin in America, which enjoyed the distinction for some time of being at least semi-mythical; for this reason it collected round itself a variety of legends, which are still hardly dispelled. The animal in question is known technically as the '*Lepidosiren*'; and to some naturalists it was a kind of zoological Mrs Harris. Its very existence as distinct from the African Mudfish was denied. Lately, however, it has been discovered that in certain parts bordering on the river Paraguay, in South America, the fish is, and has been for long, an article of food not by any manner of means recherché. This being so, it is probable that the African fish at the Zoo will soon be reinforced by the arrival of its American relatives. So rare, however, was the American *Lepidosiren*, that in the year 1887 only four specimens were known in European museums; and on the principle that no prophet has honour in his own country, there were none at all in the Museum of Rio de Janeiro.

But though there were not any individuals in museums in South America, there was an immense amount of floating information respecting the creature. In some of the deep lakes in Brazil a monster was reported to exist 'black, short, but of an enormous thickness.' This description, though alluring to the naturalist, is calculated to appal the average person who is not a savant. And besides, the habits of the mysterious animal were on a par with its apparently gloomy and ferocious aspect. Like the celebrated 'Snapping-turtle,' it was said by the natives to seize and devour horses and horned cattle. The unfortunate beasts, when swimming a river or drinking at the margin of a lake, suddenly and quietly disappeared; the fish gripped them beneath, and never showed itself above the surface.

There is a fell American fish which really does do a considerable damage to such large animals; this is, of course, the Electric Eel; but everybody is agreed that an eel can have no possible relations to a *Lepidosiren*; confused though zoological classification is apt to be, and changeable, this much is certain. Still, the eel in question may have afforded a part of the whole, which is termed the '*Minhocao*' The mythical creature is very probably a kind of mermaid, constructed from diverse elements of the more deadly inhabitants of the rivers and lakes of Brazil. The word *Minhocao* applied to the reputed fish really signifies, in the Portuguese language, 'large earthworm.' The name probably gave a different turn to the legends; for a story was told, some few years since, that in the same part of the South American Continent a huge creature was heard and seen to force its way through the dried-up mud of the margin of a swamp, its progress being rendered

audible and visible by the tearing-up of such trees, of whatever size, as happened to come in its way.

Now, even this behaviour does not by any means put altogether out of court the possibility of a great fish like the *Lepidosiren*. In tropical Africa, the *Protopterus* has occasionally to suffer the apparent inconvenience of a complete drought. It often lives in rivers which the torrid sun of Africa dries up for a part of the year. Nature, however, has provided the fish with an excellent way of coping with this seeming difficulty to its continuity as a species. When the water supply begins to fail, and its failure begins to be felt, the fish calmly proceeds to fabricate for itself, out of a mixture of slime and mud, a case which has been called a 'cocoon.' Within this cocoon the fish can live securely, free from any persecution by enemies, who would at once pounce upon such a fish out of water. It can breathe, though probably it does not breathe very much during this estivation, through the chinks and crannies of its manufactured home; but the air thus used does not supply the gills which it has in common with all other fish; the beast has lungs like those of the higher animals in general, and of the simple amphibia in particular. When the welcome rains descend, and the mud is again diluted, the fish awakens up from its enforced torpor, and swims freely about, a fish in reality.

It requires no great amount of theory to suppose that the American *Lepidosiren*, which is very near, indeed, to its African connection, has a similar capacity for triumphing over the general defects of the piscine organisation. If so, we have at once an explanation of the subterranean monster which terrified the imported negro. Start with an animal six feet long, and add a trifle for fear, and another trifle for natural exaggeration, inherent in the Caucasian mind, and possibly also in that of the negro, and at once a very respectable creature is created. So entirely at their ease are the Mudfish of Africa in their extemporised dwelling-place, that a number were lately exported, and arrived safely at the Zoological Gardens in London, where, on being placed in water, they crawled out and began to swim about.

Descending from the regions of sheer imagination to those of sober fact, it is a matter of the highest interest that these two peculiar types of fish—if we may so call them—occur on both sides of the Atlantic. The only explanations of this fact are either intense conservatism on the part of the fish, or extreme mobility on the part of the continents of Africa and America. We must either call in the aid of a vanished Atlantis, or believe that the fish slowly journeyed by a kind of Northwest Passage from one continent to the other. Scientific opinion happens to be just at present in a convenient state of flux; either hypothesis would secure adherents. On the one hand, we know well that the fish is of ancient lineage and conservative in its characters; it has come down to us from very early times, with many of its present characteristics. On the other hand, opinion is growing in favour of a passage of land from Africa to South America by way

of the Antarctic Continent, about which we have been hearing so much lately—a far better way of transit than the roundabout route by the North Pole.

THE BEAUTY OF VOSS.

By CHARLES EDWARDES.

L.

SIEGFRIED NANSEN was known as 'the Beauty of Voss' far and wide. Even in Bergen, they would have known whom you meant, if you had so referred to her. She was twenty-one, and just orphaned. Her eyes were of the common Norwegian blue: a clear honest colour. She was, besides, tall and well shaped, almost stately in her demeanour, and with a complexion that many a fashionable lady would have given thousands of crowns to be able to rival for even but a year.

She was as good a girl as most Norwegian dale-bred damsels. Her career had been uneventful and happy. She was duly confirmed, like other girls, and on that most solemn occasion her eyes had overflowed with simple tears of happiness. Her gratitude for the privilege of living was very sincere. In her heart, while the Frost gave her his blessing, she solemnly made a vow that she would thwart her parents in nothing. They had done much for her. She was ready and eager to do all for them that she could. This was when she was sixteen, and already notorious for her beauty. What cared she for such fame at that time? She meant to be good and dutiful. The manner in which the young men of the valley looked at her on Sundays when she approached the church with the other girls of the village, rather confused than delighted her.

And so for the next three years she milked her father's kine, worked among the hay of the Voss meadows—fine and deep with grass, some of them—and enjoyed winter and summer alike.

Once her father mentioned marriage in her presence. But Siegfried's mother, a masterful woman, cut him short. 'Don't put notions into the lass's head,' she exclaimed somewhat angrily. 'I've plans for her—by-and-by.'

Fru Nansen was not a very tender mother. She had come from Bergen, where she had been maid-servant in an hotel. With other things, she had learned in the town that a pretty face can be turned to excellent account. She had not the least idea of allowing her husband to marry Siegfried out of hand to Olaus Christisen, just because the lad declared he loved her better than his own mother, and would live and die for her if she would let him. Olaus was a worthy young fellow, three years Siegfried's senior. But he was only the third son of his father, who had a small farm; and his position in the world was yet to make.

Mrs Nansen reckoned she had a better match in store for Siegfried in Henrik Pegner, the rich bonder under Swartefjeld; and she meant it to come to pass. Pegner was forty, and already twice a widower. But what of that? He had seen Siegfried at village festivals, and,

greatly enamoured of her, like the shrewd, sensible fellow he was, had straightway won the suffrages of her mother. Fru Nansen was a vain, headstrong, and rather ill-tempered woman, and she could not resist the sly blandishments of Bonder Pegner, or the gold brooch with a pearl in the middle which he had ventured to offer her at Yuletide.

As for Siegfried, do what she could to keep her heart absolutely impartial and indifferent to mankind, she could not help being terrified when her mother left her alone with Herr Pegner, and being strangely glad when Olaus and she were alone.

Pegner was not an elegant wooer. He was too old, he said, for that sort of thing. He had spent all his nice phrases and pretty smiles upon his two deceased wives. Would Siegfried take them for granted? he asked. Nothing contented the girl better than to do this: and she hoped he would take himself off afterwards. But no; the man must needs tell off on finger and thumb the worth of his farm, the number of his cows (with their names), and the quantity of milk and wool which he thought a fair average income of produce from his various quadrupeds.

'No doubt about it,' he would then exclaim, with a chuckle and a satisfied stroking of his long red cheeks, 'but there's a good living for a woman in my place.'

The odd thing was that, though he beat about the bush in this coarse way, he did not ask Siegfried outright to marry him. Most men, with his opportunities, would have done it, despite Fru Nansen's wish that he should bide his time till the girl was two-and-twenty.

On the other hand, one June night, when all Voss was *en fête*, and the meadows were full of pleasure-seekers, at eleven o'clock in the mild light of a midsummer gloaming, young Olaus could not control himself. 'Siegfried,' he said to the tired girl, 'I will accompany you home, and you shall go to bed and sleep; but first—Oh, how I wish I were as rich as—as—Bonder Pegner, whom I detest!'

'Why do you detest Henrik Pegner, Olaus?' asked the girl, with some surprise.

'Because he—he loves you, Siegfried,' stammered the lad; 'and because I do too, though I am so much poorer than he is, and therefore not at all likely to gain your mother's consent.'

The girl hung her head and felt warm all over. Then she looked up sideways. 'You love me, Olaus?' she whispered, with a crimson face, to which the midsummer twilight gave a saintly beauty.

'I shall die if I cannot marry you—or at least I shall go to America, which is the same thing,' exclaimed the lad.

The girl said nothing. They walked on until they had distanced all the others, and were in the pine forest just to the north of Voss. Then, when Olaus's feelings had nearly overmastered him, Siegfried again peeped at him sideways. 'Olaus,' she said quietly, 'you need not go to America for me.'

He hesitated a moment, and then, well, he took Siegfried in his arms and kissed her again and again. As for Siegfried, she felt that her

cup of happiness was full. And of this she was convinced when the next day she told her father what had happened, and Nansen said that Olaus was a good lad, and he had no objection to him. Siegfried's father was not a very strong-minded man. He did not, in the face of the girl's sweet illusion (as he feared it might be), like to mention her mother and the scheme that was concerned with Herr Pegner. He was a bit of a domestic coward.

'I tell you, Siegfried, I think very well of Olaus—a fine strong fellow as ever was. I'd say "Yes" with all my heart, by-and-by.'

That was enough for the girl; she whispered not a word of it to her mother, and lived in a maiden vision of felicity for just four-and-twenty hours. Then they brought Nansen home on a couple of turf creels bound together. He had had a fit in the fields. That night he died, without having spoken an intelligible word. The people of Voss were always of opinion, they said, that Nansen was not sound in health. His sudden death was not, therefore, surprising. It was a sad affair, of course—very. But it would have been a deal sadder for the 'Beauty of Voss'—of whom they were so proud—if it had been the mother instead of the father. Fru Nansen was as rare a woman as Herr Nansen had been unobtrusive and unsuccessful (speaking comparatively) as a man.

The funeral was, for Voss, almost a grand spectacle, and the pastor, good man, spoke many comforting words at the grave-side, where Fru Nansen shed more tears than she had ever shed in her life. There was not much genuine sorrow at the source of these tears. Still, she could not help missing the man over whom, for more than twenty years, she had exercised a rule of iron.

A week later, young Olaus, who had been in Bergen to see if he could anyhow become partner in a herring-boat, paid the dame a solemn visit.

'Well, Olaus Christisen,' said Fru Nansen, as she whisked a fly from her nice widow's cap—'what have you got to say so very special?'

The lady's manner oppressed the young man. He meant to be diplomatic, and set his hopes before her in convincing array. He had almost succeeded in getting hired by a Tromso man with a fleet of five 'hearty boats.' Upon the strength of this, he already saw himself a rich Bergen merchant, with a comfortable banker's balance, due to stock-fish and cod-liver oil.

As it was, however, Bonder Pegner's dis-agreeable, prosperous form came to his mind, and the sense of humility by contrast made him look and feel foolish. 'I want,' he said, 'that is, I should like, dear, honoured Fru Nansen—'

'Come, come!' interrupted the dame. 'I can see through you like glass. You may as well say you want Siegfried, and get it over.'

'That is it,' cried the young man, elatedly.

'The more fool you, Olaus Christisen, and so there's an end of it. I don't bring only children into the world to give them in marriage to young men with nothing to speak

of.—Good-afternoon to you—I have my bread to see to.'

'But'— began the youth.

'There's no "but" in it; and that's all I have to say to you on the subject.'

As Fru Nansen went out of the room, leaving Olaus alone with a tobacco plant, a tame magpie, and a cat, which seemed considerably afraid of the magpie's bill, there was no rejoinder possible. Olaus therefore snatched up his cap, and went into the open air at enmity with the world.

'She won't hear of it,' he blurted out to Siegfried, who was waiting for him under a cherry tree.

The girl looked sad for a moment. Then, seeing tears in Olaus's eyes, she quietly offered him her handkerchief. 'We must hope for the best,' she whispered; and somehow, when the young man heard her, he felt that all was not lost. There was a decision about the girl's voice that declared her her mother's daughter.

II.

Six months passed—for Olaus, six cruel months of doubt and despair in alternation. Voss was white, instead of green. The mountains and the lake, and the valley which ran from the lake toward Stalheim, were all deep in snow. One day the weather was bright and nipping, and the mild sun just peeped over the mountain tops to look at the snug little village by the lake-side. The next, the snow was driving as in Norway it well knows how to drive. The people attended church in sledges, and great was the concourse of goloshes, of Scotch manufacture, usually to be beheld in the church porch on Sunday mornings. In short, winter was in full swing, and the villagers who were so unfortunate as to die were not even able to be buried; they were stacked stiff and stark in their coffins in the little mortuary house adjacent to the church, there to stay until the frost went out of the ground, and the snow lifted its deep mantle therefrom.

To Olaus it seemed that his hopes were no nearer fruition than ever they had been. The widow Nansen was ice-cold and contemptuous whenever she was obliged to say a word to him. Nor had Siegfried much positive encouragement to offer him. Again and again he had said, 'I shall go to Tromso in the spring.' But though his sweetheart could not announce that she had won her mother to her and his side, the smile with which she was wont to urge him to be patient yet a little longer, gradually became more confident.

'I cannot think, Siegfried,' said Olaus one day in a pet, 'how you can take it so easily.'

They had met by sweet chance at the apothecary's shop, and the apothecary, who was a sympathetic young man, and quite understood Olaus's wink of entreaty, had left them and his drugs together.

'No!' rejoined Siegfried with the far-away look in her blue eyes which at times vastly annoyed her lover.

'No, I cannot. And that beast Pegner always in the house! I heard his sledge-bells this morning when I was chopping

wood, and the wickedness of Cain swelled in my bosom at the sound. I believe, Siegfried dearest, if he had come my way at that moment, I should have cleft his skull.'

'That would have been murder, and they would have imprisoned you for life.'

'I do not care.'

'But I do, you mad-minded fellow. Pegner is still in the house.'

Olaus raised his hard-palmed hands to his forehead, as if to keep his brain from bursting out of its bone mansion.

'With my mother,' added Siegfried.

'May the devil!' began Olaus.

But the girl put her mitten hand to his mouth. 'Hush!' she whispered. 'You are certainly not so clever at understanding things as some young men would be. How is it, Olaus?'

'How is it? How the plague can I tell! Let me go and slay him out of the way.'

'And break my mother's heart?' said Siegfried, with a sweet coquettish smile on her pretty red lips.

'And yours too, I begin to think!' sighed the thick-headed young man. After which he plodded into the snow again, and left the girl ungallantly to find her way home by herself.

But Siegfried understood Olaus, and she would not really have exchanged his stupidity for all the learning of a University Professor of Christiania.

She re-entered the house, and stole away to the back, where the cat was seen washing its paws on the doorstep and looking discontentedly at the snow; while the magpie jerked its tail up and down as it fluttered from chimney-pot to roof-line and exchanged remarks with another magpie not yet domesticated. Here she did much household work, singing gently to herself all the time. Now and then, her mother's laughter could be heard; and occasionally such explicit words as 'Oh, dear Herr Pegner, how entertaining you are! I never met so agreeable a man as you.' She also said, more than once, 'My late man, Nansen, was a fool to you, Herr Pegner!' But Siegfried did not hear this remark, which would not have pleased her.

Pegner stayed till supper, and Siegfried waited on them both. At times, the honest bonder might have been seen looking from Fru Nansen to Siegfried, and from Siegfried to Fru Nansen, in a curious manner.

The dame noticed it, and asked what he was thinking of.

'I was confused-like,' he said. 'It is so difficult for a plain man like me to know which is the mother and which the daughter.'

'That's capital, Herr Pegner,' laughed Siegfried.

As for Fru Nansen, she looked as pleased as a baby with its first rattle.

At parting, the bonder kissed Fru Nansen on the cheek, and would have saluted Siegfried in the same manner, only she avoided the courtesy. The girl was very happy.

'You guess,' said Fru Nansen afterwards, not without embarrassment, 'what has occurred, do you not, Siegfried?'

'I think so, mother. A thousand felicitations.'

'Thank you, child. He is a worthy fellow, and in such excellent circumstances. His other wives did not manage him properly, I fancy. We shall see what we shall see. But there's one thing I am a little distressed about. It would hardly do, my dear child, to have you in the house. I think you will be very happy with your uncle Jens at Eide.'

'No; I should not, mother.'

'Bless the child, what a positive tone she has!'

'I think I am in the right of it, then. You have deprived me of Pegner!—'

'I deprived you! Why, my dear Siegfried, he was never seriously taken with you.'

'O—h! I tell you what, mother; I am going round to the Christensens. I know it is late; but poor Olaus has had so much disappointment lately, that I can't help giving him this good news as soon as possible.'

Fru Nansen sat and pursed her lips meditatively. It was wonderful what a strong spirit this pretty daughter of hers had developed of late. Such a spirit was not to be tolerated in Pegner's household—that was positive. Then her thoughts centred upon the Eide uncle. The man was fond of corn-brandy—too fond of it, by far. After all, Olaus was a broad-shouldered, steady-going lad. Besides, Pegner was wanting a steward for his little milk-farm by Tvinde. There was a snug cottage to it and some good mark-land into the bargain. Why should they not have it? How charming it would be to have both weddings on the same day!

'Very well, Siegfried—if the snow isn't too bad, run and fetch him in,' said Fru Nansen.

That day month the name of Nansen became extinct in Voss, and the 'Beauty of Voss' was led beamingly to Tvinde amid the usual gala ceremonies.

VILLANELLE.

Down the dear old lane where we always meet,
With its hedges tall and its grassy way,
Comes Ethel, blushing, her lover to greet.

The bracken is tall and the wild-rose sweet,
And the air is scented with new-mown hay,
Down the dear old lane where we always meet.

In a simple frock, so pretty and neat,
With a face as fresh and fair as the day,
Comes Ethel, blushing, her lover to greet.

There's an old gray stone makes a mossy seat,
With a bank behind where butterflies stray,
Down the dear old lane where we always meet.

Daintily tripping on dainty wee feet,
With an innocent haste that brooks no delay,
Comes Ethel, blushing, her lover to greet.

There's a thrill that quickens my heart's quick beat,
And I fain would think 'twill ever be May:
Down the dear old lane where we always meet
Comes Ethel, blushing, her lover to greet.

HOLT SHAFTO.